

The Prayer Movement in Belgian Congo

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In a study of every revival movement across the church we find the prominent place that prayer has taken in every instance. This may be illustrated from actual experiences in interior Africa.

We came to Africa nearly 28 years ago believing that the Christ who called us to Africa would answer prayer and send a spiritual awakening to this dark continent. We called together a group of our missionary friends and proposed that we make Friday a day of fasting and prayer until God gave us victory. Heathen customs of child marriage, polygamy, idol worship, moon worship, fetishes and charms everywhere, wicked funeral rites even to placing people alive in the grave with the departed humbled our hearts before God and caused us to cry in desperation of soul, "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?" Has not the One who called us here promised us victory if we pray and trust Him? Through more than two years of fasting and prayer and traveling constantly in the villages of our district we held up Christ mighty to save unto the uttermost. Then by the hundreds they began reaching out after a new life but they could not grasp the meaning of it.

In deep agony of soul we decided to follow the plan Bishop Warne of India had followed--of calling our sixty-five preachers and their families together with such who might be interested to study the Book of Acts for ten days and to pray. The people themselves prepared a palm front tabernacle to protect them from the tropical sun, and made them little houses of the same materials. After two years of fasting and prayer and about three more days of Bible study and prayer, there swept over the multitude something of the same spirit that prevailed on the day of Pentecost, when the multitude were moved heavenward at one mighty movement which brought thousands of souls to the camp ground to find the same Christ the first praying multitude had found. They scattered the holy fire from village to village, witnessing scenes transcending words.

At one district meeting following this camp the preachers reported 2200 people had been won to Christ in ten months' time.

This movement spread from village to village for hundreds of miles throughout the tribe. Churches sprang up everywhere, built by converts to the new faith, until great persecution began from the Roman Catholic Church. Many witch doctors were gloriously won to Christ and became witnesses of their new-found faith.

For most of these intervening years we have been trying to keep up with this Peoples' Movement. The work developed so rapidly in the whole area for which the church was responsible to the North and West in the Lodja, Bena Dibele, Kataka Kombe, and Lomela territories, that the Wembo Nyama District had to be subdivided later into the Lodja District, then again the Kataka Kombe District and now again the Lomela District. Lodja now has a splendid Missionary and African staff on their station and in the district, with hundreds of students in their schools and 125 preachers now recorded on their district, and with a host of local lay preachers in addition in the villages.

As at Lodja we have here at Kataka Kombe another station with missionary and African staff, with homes, schools and dispensary and some fifty preachers preaching a glorious gospel out over the district, and hundreds of children in our schools. Two years ago it again became necessary to form Lomela district and now such an evangelistic opportunity is given us that it has been named by the General Conference as one of the four "Lands of Decision" for the next quadrennium. Already Lomela has a growing staff of workers and plans are being laid for rapid development. Practically all the present leaders of our Central Congo Conference have been won to Christ through this Peoples' Movement.